



## **With Smartphones and New Giving Model, Benevolent Helps Those in Need Make Pitch for Help**

*Holiday Giving Transformed by Philanthropic, Online Startup that Creates Personal and Direct Connection Between Donors and Individuals in Need*

(CHICAGO, November 13, 2012) – [Benevolent \(www.benevolent.net\)](http://www.benevolent.net) – the nonprofit, tech startup connecting donors and individuals in need – has successfully created an online platform that uses the power of people telling their personal stories to connect with and motivate giving by small-dollar donors (\$5 or more). Donors contribute directly to help one person overcome one challenge.

Prospective donors can read and select from an increasing number of brief and compelling personal stories, accompanied by photos and videos. Founded in Dec. 2011 and based in Evanston, Ill., Benevolent partners with local nonprofits throughout the country who know and validate those facing needs so that donors can be assured that their support is well targeted and well managed.

“Giving through Benevolent is very different and so much more personal than through other donating experiences,” explains Benevolent Founder and CEO [Megan Kashner](#). “Benevolent enables recipients to tell their own stories, *and* share their updates after their needs are met – including thanking their donor(s).”

“During this consumption-driven holiday season, people can fund a recipient’s need in someone else’s name as a gift. What a tremendous way to give a unique gift to people who don’t need another physical item to worry about returning,” Kashner concluded.

Prior to launching Benevolent, Kashner was an executive director of the [Taproot Foundation](#). Benevolent was born from her vision of a new, more personal and direct form of crowd-source giving that could greatly impact and benefit donors, recipients, nonprofits and society. Kashner earned a master of social work degree (MSW) from the University of Chicago and an MBA from Northwestern University. She [spoke about philanthropy](#) at the White House in September.

Philanthropic experts praising Benevolent:

[Mari Kuraishi](#), co-founder and president of [GlobalGiving](#): “What Benevolent is facilitating – a direct connection between the helper and the helped – has the potential for transforming the experience of philanthropy. A transformative philanthropic experience, in turn, could start a ripple effect of change throughout the nonprofit sector and beyond.”

[Scott Allard](#), poverty researcher and author, and associate professor at the University of Chicago’s School of Social Service Administration: “Benevolent helps to weave a connective web of people to fill in critical gaps in the safety net. I think Benevolent has the potential to transform how we think about philanthropy, as well as challenge misconceptions about poverty and need in America.”

Benevolent enables donors to identify potential recipients by type of need, the nonprofit partner recommending them on the site, and location (based on their recommending partner).

Benevolent's Chicago-area pilot has proven successful, having met the needs of more than 40 people with gifts from almost 400 individual donors. Benevolent has more than 40 non-profit partners (and growing) in: Illinois (34 partners), New York City, Los Angeles, and Wash., D.C. / Virginia / Maryland (three partners).

Three recipient success stories:

- [Melissa](#), a 20-year-old who assumed custody of her younger sisters while her mother was in jail and needed school supplies and clothes to care for them. (13 supporters gave \$365).
- [Damarian](#), a trained welder who needed safety gear to be employable in his new field and support his son. (Six supporters contributed \$280).
- [Lee](#), a gardener who needed his truck repaired to work in 48 community gardens. (18 supporters gave \$745).

Benefit to community-based nonprofit partners and their clients:

[Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers \(CLAIM\)](#), a Benevolent nonprofit partner, has posted and had the needs met for four clients on Benevolent.

[Alexis Mansfield](#), CLAIM's staff attorney and pro bono director, explains: "Benevolent gives our clients a unique opportunity for people to hear their individual stories and connect with them as human beings. The site also increases our organization's visibility with people who care.

"It takes us less than 10 minutes to post a client's complete story on Benevolent. We and our client take a smart-phone video, upload it and complete a simple online questionnaire. Done," Mansfield continued. "It's more than just financial support. Benevolent helps our clients feel like they have other people pulling for them.

National presence planned:

Benevolent expects to help fund the needs for more than 800 individuals, and have nearly 100 nonprofit partners in approximately 20 cities by July 2013.

Kashner is a seasoned nonprofit leader with more than 20 years of strategic management, community partnership and organizational innovation experience.

**Media Contacts:**

Benevolent: Aleca Sullivan - 847.231.2353  
[aleca@benevolent.net](mailto:aleca@benevolent.net), <http://www.benevolent.net>

[SHERMAN communications & marketing \(www.shermancm.com\)](#): Jason Sherman – 312-577-7650  
[jason@shermancm.com](mailto:jason@shermancm.com), public relations agency

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